



VERMONT URBAN AND COMMUNITY FORESTRY COUNCIL

Quarterly Council Meeting

December 3, 2025

Essex Junction, VT

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Elise Schadler, VJ Comai, Cecilia Danks, Bonnie Donahue, Savannah Ferreirra, Joanne Garton, Jens Hilke, Evan Horn, Emily Inoue, Katarzyna Janiga, Melissa Levy, Adam McCullough, Bob McCullough, Sara Packer, Oliver Pierson Tim Smith, Scott Wunderle.

Federal and State Program Updates

- National Partners in Community Forestry Conference
 - Gap – missed due to printing
- Federal Program Updates
 - Initially, FY25 funding was held back and there was concern it would disappear, but through lots of advocacy, it was reinstated
 - Advocacy was taken very seriously by Senator Welch and his staff.
 - FY26 budget still unknown, but will continue advocacy efforts
- State Program Updates
 - At the state level, lots of continuity in leadership; however, we don't anticipate to be able to grow programs (35% budget increase is more of a cut due to the rising health and benefit costs)
 - Will continue supporting UCF staff – not asking for too big increases, but will look for other funding avenues
 - NBRC awarded grant to both the UCF and Forest Economy programs
 - ARPA, IJJA funds are expiring and State is looking into new funding streams to fund projects/staff
- UCF Updates
 - Funding sources:
 - Ginger
 - 100% USPA APHIS – Forest Pest Outreach Program
 - Gwen
 - 50% USDA Forest Service IRA/FPR Private Lands Grant
 - 45% USDA Forest Service UCF Core Grant
 - 5% UVM
 - Joanne
 - 50% Vermont General Fund
 - 25% USDA Forest Service, UCF
 - 15% USDA Forest Service IRA/FPR Private Lands Grant
 - 5% USDA Forest Service Black Ash Project/FPR Forest Health Grant



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- Adam
 - 100% ARPA Urban Forestry (shift to UCF Grant soon)
- Elise
 - 50% Vermont General Fund
 - 25% USDA Forest Service – UCF Core
 - 25% USDA Forest Service IRA/Urban Forestry Grant
- Budget
 - Primary source of program funds USDA Forest Service UCF
 - Annual core grant; awarded as a five-year grant
 - UCF22 – nearly all spent
 - UCF23 – funds being spent
 - UCF24 – received very late, just started spending
 - UCF25 – received one month after receiving 2024 funds
 - UCF25 – unknown
- UCF Program Stats
 - 141 communities received technical/educational assistance – 92 instances of individual/technical assistance
- 2025 Highlights
 - Worked with BGS on trees on state lands
 - Joanne – received pesticide licensure can inject infected trees
 - MOU – growing trees in new Montpelier nursery
 - Grants
 - 49/50 active grants
 - Only \$40,00 to give away in grants this year; grant round open
 - Requesting 2 Council members to be on grants review committee
 - UCF Conference
 - 125 attendees
 - Would like full Council participation in 2026
 - Arborist Day of Service – attended 21 arborists
 - Check Out Forestry – planting plan with three libraries, planting trees on their grounds
 - Vermont Community Canopy - \$5000 to work at Vermont grower to plant trees
 - Black Ash Pounding Treatment
 - Two workshops on state lands
 - Worked with basket weavers
 - Forest Protectors Game
 - Ginger made an educational board game, will add link in tree mail if you would like to request one



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Public Policy Analysis Exercise

- Joanne has been leading a novel and exciting effort to utilize a large language model to assess tree ordinances, policies and explicit management practices across all Vermont municipalities. As we finalize the model and prepare to run all 252 reports, we'd like to utilize our time with Council membership to debut the analysis, consider and discuss the reports and gather feedback about rolling this out to our audiences and beyond.
- GAP: Lunch pickup
 - Tree wardens in charge of shade trees after 2020 updates
 - Montpelier conservation commission not based on report
 - Need for format table to be more simplified, and use comparison
 - It does put technical assistance programs in a tough spot

Revisiting Council Format & Schedule

Subcommittee Reports

- Conference Sponsorships
 - Received \$4,200 through 9 sponsorships
 - Will try to fund 2026 conference through sponsorships, but Gwen will be doing this on her own
- Agency Partnerships
 - Federal impact felt
- Non-Profit Models
 - What statewide UCF could do, if a UCF non-profit existed
 - Funding landscape changed drastically
- Town Forests
 - Town forests census completed
 - First draft of technical report ready to share
 - Data collection ongoing
 - Methods: sent email to every town clerk, or equivalent (+ 4 resources, responsible for 62% - 158 out of 254)
 - Sent census form to key contact for each forest, plus 6 reminders (response, 6%)
 - 186 forests across 114 municipalities; 44 municipalities with no forests
 - Census yielded 112 usable responses in first cohort
 - Next steps
 - Review current draft of first cohort, revisit based in input, format, post, then distribute
 - Solicit 2nd cohort responses; develop and implement outreach methodology with direct contact to municipality
 - Combine first and second cohort
 - Undergrad UVM Class



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- Vermont's Town Forest Stewards – strengths, challenges and ways to support them
- Visited 7 communities (5 municipalities), conversation with 20 community members
- Vermont Land Trust to host Town Forest webinars in 2026
- Tentatively: February (general awareness, status, available resources) and March (deeper dive into census cohort/funding and hopefully spur more community responses)
- Possibly create a minor certificate in UCF at UVM
- Bibliography – history of town forests as they developed
- Town Forests Conservancy of New England, with the goal of holding management records of New England's town forests
- Advancing Arboriculture
 - Running/single event
 - Organize Vermont Arborist Day of Service
 - 21 arborists came – will repeat next year in new location
 - Will host ISA day of safety in southeast Vermont this spring

2026 Planning

- New format – only 3 UCF staff will be creating committees – Elise, Joanne, Adz
- How to provide technical assistance to towns without federal assistance
- UCF staff to draw up workplan for subcommittee, then send around to people
- Possibly education committee to add outreach
- Update Council page with list of committees and who's on them

Council Member Updates

- Rutland Urban Forestry Update
 - \$75,000 grant – use to increase green spaces, tree canopy, Silvi cells
 - Made large rain garden in mostly unused parking lot (halfway through project)
 - \$1 million grant, capitol grant for downtown – likely add Silvi cell
- Burlington Urban Forestry Update
 - EAB – confirmed July 2024
 - 1100 ash trees to start; 374 left to remove – 100 have been adopted (resident pays for treatment)
 - Coming to completion on Main St.
 - Used excess wood to give to residents – wood or wood chips
- Integrating UCF Goals into Regional and Municipal Plans
 - Integrating UCF goals into regional/municipal plans
 - ACT 181 – all plans to go in front of Land Use Review Board
- ANR's Climate Toolkit



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- Released municipal climate toolkit
- Tree of Heaven, Be Gone!
 - Tree of Heaven, I-189/Colchester
 - Treated and removed it; will spray in spring
 - Stump removed so area can be moved to avoid regrowth
- Language Discussion
 - Adversarial language, such as invasives used; when such language is used, it continues to spread hate and be part of the problem
 - Role as public servants to provide language that is non-biased, accurate and scientifically grounded frame issues in ways that support understanding, inclusion and responsibility
 - Vermont changing language before academia tells it to